AFFIRMING FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION

Foundations and Directions

A Framework for
French First Language Education
in Alberta

Alberta
LEARNING

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PREAMBLE

The provision of constitutional guarantees for official minority-language education rights was enshrined in 1982 in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Three subsequent Supreme Court of Canada rulings—Mahé v. Alberta; *Reference Re Public Schools Act* (Manitoba); Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince-Edward Island—affirmed the right for francophones to govern their own schools. These rulings also clarified the role and mandate of francophone education outside Quebec. The Alberta *School Act* promulgated in 1988 and amended in 1992 reflects the *Charter* and the Supreme Court rulings.

Since 1982, constitutional, legislative and administrative issues as they relate to francophone education have been the focus of many writings, conferences and meetings not only in Alberta but across Canada. They have all been valuable in furthering our understanding of francophone education. However, what was still missing was a document that dealt specifically and completely with the nature, role and mandate of francophone education.

Affirming Francophone Education—Foundations and Directions presents a clear and succinct description of the educational needs of francophone students, of their families and communities. It identifies the expected outcomes for francophone education and the conditions that must be met to ensure these outcomes are achieved. It describes the educational project at the very core of francophone education and emphasizes the importance of the school-family-community partnership in achieving this project.

This document is intended for all who are involved in the planning, implementation and administration of francophone education: department officials, parents, researchers, school administrators, teachers and trustees. They now have the solid framework and direction to guide them in their endeavour to provide an excellent education to Alberta's francophone students.

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FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION IN ALBERTA

CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS

Legislative context

The historical and legislative evolution of francophone education in Alberta spans more than a century. The following are some of the highlights of this evolution.

Canadian Constitution and education

1867

- The *Constitution Act, 1867* places education under provincial jurisdiction. It also defines rights related to separate and other denominational schools.

1982

- Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (of the *Constitution Act, 1982*) provides constitutional guarantees for minority-language education rights.

- Section 29 of the *Charter* upholds the rights and privileges enshrined in the *Constitution Act, 1867* with respect to separate and other denominational schools.

Right to francophone education

Under section 23 of the *Charter*, all Canadian citizens—francophone and anglophone alike—who live in a minority linguistic setting are entitled to have their children educated in the official language of the minority, everywhere in Canada.

Members of the French or English minority in a Canadian province or territory thus possess the right to have their children receive their primary and secondary education in the language and facilities of the minority. This right applies wherever there are enough children of eligible Canadian citizens to warrant the provision, management and control of instruction in the minority language using public funds.

Legislative background of francophone education in Alberta

1842

- The first French-language school is founded at the Lac Sainte-Anne mission. Subsequently, other schools using French as a language of instruction were established based on the *North-West Territories Education Act, 1841*.

1875/1877

- The *North-West Territories Act* was passed in 1875 and amended in 1877. It permits Francophones living in the North-West Territories to use French as a language of instruction.

1892

- A school decree issued by the North-West Territories Council of Public Education makes English the official language of instruction in the North-West Territories. However, the decree does allow school boards to offer one primary course in French.

1901

- Section 75 of the North-West Territories decree governing schools makes English the language of instruction, but permits limited use of French in primary classes as provided for in the 1892 decree.

1905 and 1907

- Section 17 of the *Alberta Act, 1905* gives the provincial legislature decision-making powers in education, with the exception of the constitutional guarantees provided under section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. Those guarantees, which deal with the denominational nature of schools, are incorporated into the *Alberta Act*.

- The 1901 decree governing francophone education remains in effect when Alberta becomes a province in 1905.

1925

- A regulation entitled *Instructions Concerning the Teaching of French in the Elementary Schools* states that, in establishments where a school board offers a primary French course, all subjects except English may be taught in French in Grades 1 and 2. Beginning in Grade 3, however, the regulation allows only one hour per day for the study of the French language, although teachers may provide explanations in French when necessary. The regulation remains in effect in the school acts of 1936, 1945 and 1950.

1952

- The *School Act* is revised. As a rule, all courses must be taught in English, although a school district or division may authorize the teaching of one elementary course in French.

1964

- The *School Act* is amended to permit teaching in French from Grades 1 to 9, but in decreasing amounts: Grades 1 and 2 may be taught entirely in French (except for one hour of English per day); in Grade 3, there must be two hours of instruction in English daily; and from Grade 4 on, instruction in French must be limited to one hour per day.

1968

- An amendment to the *School Act* allows French to be used as the language of instruction during 50% of the school day from Grades 4 to 12. A regulation further specifies the courses that may be taught in French and the subjects for which exams may be taken in French.

1970

- A new *School Act* gives the Minister of Education the power to introduce regulations governing the use of English or French as the language of instruction. Moreover, section 150 of the *School Act* permits school boards to authorize French instruction as long as the ministerial regulations to this effect are respected. The new regulations of 1970 are very similar to those of 1968.

1976

- With the adoption of Regulation 250/76, French language education undergoes a major transformation. Instruction may now be provided entirely in French, except for one hour of English per day. School boards that wish to introduce an educational program in the French language must first pass a resolution and inform the Minister. They must also

demonstrate to the Minister that they will look after the interests of students who want to continue receiving their instruction in English.

1988

- The *School Act* grants parents who qualify under section 23 of the Charter the right to have their children receive school instruction in French first language education.

1993

- The *School Act* recognizes section 23 citizens' right to govern francophone education as provided for in the *Charter* and upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1990.

1994

- The Minister of Education creates seven francophone education regions. In three regions, he establishes regional authorities to govern the education of section 23 children. In three other regions, he creates coordinating councils to facilitate the development and governance of francophone education. (See map in Appendix A.4, page 44.)

1999

- The governance of francophone education is restructured into five francophone education regions, operating as three regional authorities and two co-ordinating councils.[1]

2000

- The governance of francophone education is further restructured into four francophone education regions operated by Francophone authorities. The remaining co-ordinating councils are dissolved. (See map in appendix A.5, page 45.)[2]

Intent of section 23

Section 23 of the *Charter* helps ensure the **protection of Canada's two official languages** by providing minority groups of both languages with education in their mother tongue, thereby contributing to the vitality of their communities.

In 1990, the Supreme Court states that legislators have given to section 23 three key functions in protecting the language and culture of the country's linguistic minorities.

[1] Government of Alberta, Department of Learning, *Ministerial Order* (# 025/99).

[2] Government of Alberta, Department of Learning, *Ministerial Order* (# 004/2000). Government of Alberta, Department of Learning, *Ministerial Order* (# 016/2000).

• Flourishing of Canada's two official languages

First, the general purpose of section 23 is "to preserve and promote the two official languages of Canada, and their respective cultures, by ensuring that each language flourishes, as far as possible, in provinces where it is not spoken by the majority of the population". (Judgment, p. 13).

• Correcting the erosion of minorities

Section 23 is also intended "to correct, on a national scale, the progressive erosion of minority official language groups and to give effect to the concept of 'equal partnership' of the two official language groups in the context of education". (Judgment, p. 15).

• Creating major institutional structures

Finally, section 23 introduces a new kind of guarantee. In order to be effective, it "confers upon a group a right which places positive obligations on government to alter or develop major institutional structures." (Judgment, p. 16). Francophone governance is one example of such major institutional structures.

Definition of francophone education

In the spirit of section 23, francophone education must embody the central theme of the 1990 judgement—that is, it should be a **linguistic, cultural and community enterprise** that meets the needs of both students and the community through a school program that helps:

- affirm children's identification with and sense of belonging to the francophone culture and community
- correct linguistic and cultural erosion, or assimilation
- change and create structures to reflect the intent of section 23 of the *Charter*.

Definition of francophone school

Under section 23, francophone schools and governance by francophones become institutional structures and the principal tools that enable parents to exercise their *Charter* rights.

The francophone school is **a facility designed for living, learning, and integrating the French language, culture and community.**

It would be a serious mistake to suggest that the learning of French alone satisfies the intent of the *Charter*. "Underlying every linguistic enterprise lies a deeper cultural motivation. If such enterprises are not built upon a solid foundation rich with cultural experience that heightens the sense of belonging and identity, they risk collapsing much faster than they were erected." (Benoît Cazabon, 1992, trans.).

Conclusion

Clearly, the francophone school must be an establishment whose pillars are language, identity, culture and community integration.

COMPONENTS OF FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION

Mandate

The mandate of francophone education is rooted in the constitutional framework, the *School Act*, historical contexts, social and legal considerations, and scientific research.

There are two aspects to the mandate. One is to **provide a schooling experience built around francophone language, culture and community** as provided for under section 23 of the *Charter*. Within this context francophone students gain the knowledge and skills they need to become autonomous, responsible citizens who care about others and are able to contribute to both the renewal of the francophone community and the well-being of society in general.

The other aspect of the mandate is to **help correct the linguistic and cultural erosion suffered by students and the community** in a predominantly English milieu. To counter assimilation, instruction must be provided in a rich linguistic and cultural environment that enables students to integrate into the francophone culture and community locally, nationally and globally. This integration is achieved through cultural and community experiences and commitments that nurture the francophone identity and sense of belonging.

Such is the comprehensive mandate that guides the introduction and development of all components of the francophone education system.

Vision

Francophone education is recognized for its pursuit of excellence and its contribution to the development of francophone culture and community. It is geared to helping students grow and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to lead competent, autonomous and fulfilling lives in the 21st century.

Mission

The mission of francophone education is to ensure the transmission and vitality of French language and culture and to contribute to the growth and flourishing of the francophone community. The school plays a key role by enabling students to develop a francophone identity and a sense of belonging to the francophone community, as well as by gaining the skills they need to integrate into and participate in the well-being of their community, society and the world.

Goals and outcomes

Francophone education in Alberta aims to help students achieve the goals and outcomes set by the province and reflected in Canadian society. In general terms, the goals of education are to ensure student learning and integration into society. Besides focusing on community belonging, francophone education must indisputably be recognized provincially, nationally and internationally for its pursuit of excellence in helping shape human beings who are proud of their francophone identity and capable of contributing to society.

Expected outcomes

Francophone education will have fulfilled its mandate and attained its goals when the following results will have been achieved.

Outcome I:	Students identify with and integrate the francophone language, culture and community.

Consequently, francophone education must:

- enable students to master French as a first language;
- awaken and strengthen francophone students' cultural and linguistic identity and pride;
- develop students' sense of belonging to the francophone community on the local, national and global levels;
- provide students with a sound knowledge of French-Canadian history and of the Francophonie in general;
- introduce and instill an appreciation for the multiethnic, multilingual and intercultural nature of the francophone community.

Outcome II: Students gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes prescribed in the Alberta Program of Studies.

Consequently, francophone education must:

- nurture students' intellectual, affective, psychomotor, social, artistic, spiritual and moral growth;
- ensure quality learning in core subjects;
- develop students' appreciation and respect for the bilingual character and multicultural nature of Canada;
- convey and reinforce an enlightened understanding of Canadian and world history and evolution;
- enable students to take their rightful place in Canada and the world.

Outcome III: Students acquire a sound knowledge of English.

Consequently, francophone education must:

- help students master English and attain a high level of additive, balanced French-English bilingualism;
- foster in students an appreciation and understanding of English culture in their locality, across Canada and throughout the English-speaking world;
- allow students to integrate into and participate more fully in society as bilingual citizens.

Outcome IV: The school represents a solid, dynamic focal point of French language and culture for students, families and the francophone community.

Consequently, francophone education must:

- constitute a focal point of living culture that meets the needs and expectations of parents and the francophone community;
- foster creativity and encourage students to play an active role in helping the family, French culture and the francophone community flourish;
- promote partnerships with the home, community and business world to strengthen the complementary links that bind together school, family and community and to ensure the authenticity and relevance of francophone education;
- recognize and value the different language levels and cultural diversity within the community and encourage the integration of all aspects of francophone culture.

To sum up, francophone education should provide students with solid basic schooling, both intellectual and cultural. Its aims are the acquisition and mastery of the French language, a high level of additive French-English bilingualism, awareness of ones' roots, a commitment to the vitality and renewal of francophone culture and community, full participation in society and an openness to the world.

Clientele

• Persons covered under section 23

Francophone schools in Alberta are designed to serve people covered under section 23 of the *Charter*. Paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 23 specify which Canadian citizens have the right to have their children educated in the language of the minority at the primary and secondary levels:

(1) **all children of a parent whose first language learned and still understood is that of the linguistic minority** (French in Alberta)
(2) **all children of a parent who received his or her primary school instruction in Canada in the language of the minority**
(3) **all children whose sibling has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in Canada in the language of the minority.**

• Three categories of section 23 parents

The first category of parents whose children qualify for francophone education in Alberta consists of Canadian citizens whose first language learned and still understood is French.

The second category comprises Canadian citizens who, while not necessarily of francophone origin, received their primary school instruction in French. This clause respects the choice of parents who wish to offer their children the same opportunities to learn French and integrate into the francophone culture, opportunities that they themselves enjoyed.

The third group covered under the *Charter* are children in a family where one child has received or is receiving school instruction in Canada in French. This provision supports the family unit by offering all children of the same family the opportunity to receive a similar education. Examples of persons who could qualify include blended families or families who have lived in a milieu where the language of instruction was that of Alberta's linguistic minority.

• Other potential clienteles for francophone education

In the spirit of section 23—to ensure the vitality of minority francophone communities—and in keeping with its remedial intent, a francophone school authority may admit students from other categories of parents while respecting the mission of francophone education. For instance, although not directly covered under the *Charter*, children whose parents fit into the following categories may receive French first language schooling:

(1) parents who have francophone roots and want to reintegrate French identity and culture into their children's lives;
(2) parents who want their children to maintain their French language skills, identity and culture (i.e. francophone immigrants who are permanent residents of Canada).

Educational needs of francophone students, families and communities in a predominantly English milieu

In areas where English language and culture predominate, francophone schools and programming are shaped primarily by the linguistic, educational, cultural, identity and community needs of students, families and the francophone population.

Identifying needs

Three main sources of information are used to identify francophone educational needs in Alberta: the milieu, research findings on the acquisition of language and culture in minority settings, and the *raison d'être* of francophone education.

❶ Milieu

Learning French as a first language occurs in a specific societal context: the milieu, or setting. In Alberta, this setting is characterized by a pervasive English influence. The milieu affects the value placed on the French language and culture, as well as the sociolinguistic vitality of francophone families and community and of French in society.

Like people everywhere, francophone students in Alberta have basic physical, social, affective, intellectual and spiritual needs (Maslow). What sets francophone students and their community apart, however, is the influence of the milieu on:
- the acquisition and preservation of French as a first language;
- the identification with French culture, and the students' sense of belonging to the francophone community;
- the development of self-esteem and self-actualization vis-à-vis their cultural identity;[1]
- the ability of students, families and the community to counter the influence of assimilation and of their minority status, while at the same time integrating anglophone reality.

Educational authorities serving francophone students must take into account the milieu's influences on their linguistic and cultural

[1] See self-actualization in glossary.

development, as well as on their schooling. *Analyzing these influences will help identify students' educational needs, which in turn will determine the most appropriate objectives and strategies for francophone education.* In Alberta, francophone students' need for self-esteem and self-actualization with respect to language, identity, and cultural and community integration is a fundamental social and affective need.

As long as educational workers recognize francophone students' self-esteem and language-development needs within their educational and cultural contexts, these students will be able to grow and make their way in life with confidence. In so doing, they will have the necessary tools to meet their needs and develop their capacities in the cognitive, identity, cultural, personal, community and social spheres.

❷ Research and scientific findings on the acquisition of language and culture in a minority setting

Drawing from a significant body of data and knowledge, linguists and educational researchers have established certain principles concerning first- and second-language acquisition, as well as cognitive development in a minority setting. Francophone teaching and schooling practices should reflect these findings, which emphasize two fundamental building blocks: additive bilingualism and literacy.

• Additive bilingualism

Since the 1960s, in-depth research on language acquisition has shed light on the conditions under which students in a minority setting reach a high level of cognitive and academic development. Today, students' first language and linguistic-competence thresholds are seen as central to academic success.

To acquire "a bilingualism that is cognitively and academically beneficial" (Masny, trans.), students must first reach an optimal threshold of linguistic competence. This threshold not only opens the door to additive bilingualism, but can reduce the likelihood of the subtractive bilingualism so often found among students whose first language is not that of the majority.

Students need to master language to the point where they can make themselves understood in "decontextualized communication" situations. This means that, without the benefit of context, they are able to understand a message, generate ideas on the topic, and express themselves competently and easily in accordance with the genius of the language used. Additive bilingualism—or Masny's cognitively and academically beneficial bilingualism—is attained when students are able to manipulate ideas, establish links between them and communicate them effectively in more than one language.

• **Literacy**

Francophone education in Alberta faces certain challenges, particularly that of **literacy**. According to Masny, **literacy is a set of cultural skills, behaviours, attitudes and values, and ways of speaking, writing and acting. Literacy means the way in which one conveys and understands complex information in authentic communication situations, both oral and written, in different "texts" and contexts.** Besides being defined as an individual's linguistic and cognitive abilities, literacy is also considered a sociocultural phenomenon. Recent studies further indicate that literacy is the principal factor in academic success.

Literacy is developed in three fundamental, interrelated dimensions, which constitute specific literacies individually and multiple literacies when taken as a whole.

For francophone students in a minority setting, these various literacies have particular characteristics.

Personal literacy is the ability to understand and affirm oneself as a francophone. It includes the capacity to use French, understand the dimensions of one's francophone identity, and know how to affirm oneself and act positively as a francophone citizen. The personal dimension is present in all facets of life.

Community literacy is the ability to understand one's francophone community—to know how to live within it and participate as a community member in the broader society. Community literacy refers to the francophone community's ways of thinking, saying, doing and living, as well as those of society in general. It also includes the capacity to integrate into the community and society. Students can harmoniously merge their personal and community literacies through authentic French-language life experiences in the home, school and community.

Academic literacy is the ability to speak, read and write in order to achieve academic success. It entails learning the languages of various disciplines (English, fine arts, French, math, physical education, science, social studies, technology, etc.) that students will study throughout their schooling. It is the ability to grasp concepts and create links between ideas (critical literacy). It is the ability to develop information-technology skills. Academic literacy is intimately linked to personal and community literacies.

❸ *Raison d'être* of francophone education

Francophone groups in Canada consider education to be of prime importance in maintaining, supporting and nurturing the ethnolinguistic vitality of their members and communities. In Alberta, francophone schools provide a means for families and the community to grow within

the French language and culture, and, when necessary, provide means to reintegrate this language and culture at the very core of francophone community life. **The basic objective for francophone families and communities is to reverse assimilation through schools that have been conceived and established for that purpose.**

Specific educational needs of francophone students in Alberta

Francophone students' specific educational needs arise from the dynamics of their milieu. In light of research findings and the *raison d'être* of francophone education, these needs can be summed up as follows.

To learn and maintain French as a first language, to acquire additive bilingualism, and to realize their cognitive potential and achieve academic success, francophone students must:

- maintain their self-esteem as francophones;
- reach a high threshold of French and English linguistic competence;
- create a positive cultural identity;
- integrate into an authentic francophone community;
- gain the literacies central to developing language, cognition, identity, culture and community.

Conditions for meeting the educational needs of francophone students

The academic needs of students, families and communities in a minority setting can be met effectively through conditions and practices that help students achieve the aims of francophone education.

The following question helps identify desirable conditions and practices for francophone education.

Considering
- the influences of the milieu
- linguistic and educational research
- francophone students' specific educational needs
- the *raison d'être* of francophone education

what are the
- academic
- linguistic
- sociocultural
- educational

life experiences that will enable francophone students to
- integrate into French language and culture
- pursue academic excellence
- integrate into and contribute to the francophone community
- take their place in society?

The following ten statements help identify appropriate and effective conditions and practices for francophone education in a minority setting.

1. The family language and that of the milieu are recognized and respected as valid, unique and useful languages in daily relations.
2. French, for academic purposes and intellectual development, is used at a sufficiently high level of competence that students are able to grasp and manipulate concepts, gather knowledge, generate ideas and create their own knowledge.
3. Students learn French as a first language in a context where they and all others value it, thus enabling them to attain a high level of additive bilingualism.
4. French is lived and appreciated as a vehicle for nourishing a culture, a community and a way of being.
5. The school contributes to and receives support from the francophone community, and enhances the ethnolinguistic francophone vitality of the milieu.[2]
6. Literacies[3] are supported in ways that specifically address the needs of francophones living in a minority situation.
7. School life and programming focus on francophone cultural inclusion.[4]
8. Students receive a quality education and achieve academic performance corresponding to their level of excellence in developing their language, identity, culture, skills, talents and career choices.[5]
9. Teachers and school staff are well informed of the specific educational needs of francophone students, families and the community; they use educational methods that effectively support learning and literacies and they serve as role models for the integration of language, identity and the francophone community.
10. School district and community administrators and leaders recognize the particular needs of francophone students, families and communities; they are committed to the complementary roles played by parents, the school and the community in the education of students.

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[2] Linguistic vitality is central to the learning of French as a first language in a minority setting, and is apparent in complementary contexts (see Table 1, page 21):
- **in the student's home and extended family**: Parents initiate their children into academic, personal and community literacies through social and family ties. For instance, parents read stories to their children in French, and the family consistently favours French in all aspects of family and social life.
- **in the francophone school**: The atmosphere and programming encourage children to use French as a first language. Students are called on to live the culture in an authentic and participative context that includes family and community.
- **within and outside the francophone community**: These two contexts provide ongoing opportunities and services that promote the authentic use of French in businesses, daycares, professional services, social and leisure activities, etc.

[3] Personal, community and academic literacies.

[4] They emphasize significant contributions of French civilization and francophones throughout the world, in all fields of human endeavour such as history, literature, science as well as cultural, artistic and social accomplishments. **The educational program—like the overall school program—is an important tool that accompanies and supports students as they build their identity and integrate into the culture and community, while respecting and valuing all people's origins.**

[5] **The Program of Studies and the assessments of academic performance must include the integration of those factors that play a key role in student learning in a minority setting, and the desired outcomes of francophone education.**

Complementary contexts and roles in francophone education

Francophone education is more likely to succeed when there is an emphasis on the complementarity and coherence between students' life contexts and the roles played by the various partners—family, school, community and society—in their education.

Table 1 (page 21) illustrates the complementary contexts and roles that enter into play in minority education.

Students grow and learn French as a first language in four contexts or milieus:
- the family;
- the school and classroom;
- the local/regional francophone community on the one hand, and the broader local/regional community on the other;
- the provincial and national francophone community on the one hand, and the broader provincial and national society on the other.

Together, these milieus create four spheres of influence that determine the authenticity, legitimacy, coherence and effectiveness of francophone education (and form the backdrop in Table 1):
- language and culture;
- expectations and perceptions;
- shared responsibilities and collaboration;
- support structures.

These spheres of influence establish not only the relationship between the various contexts, but the very effectiveness of francophone education.

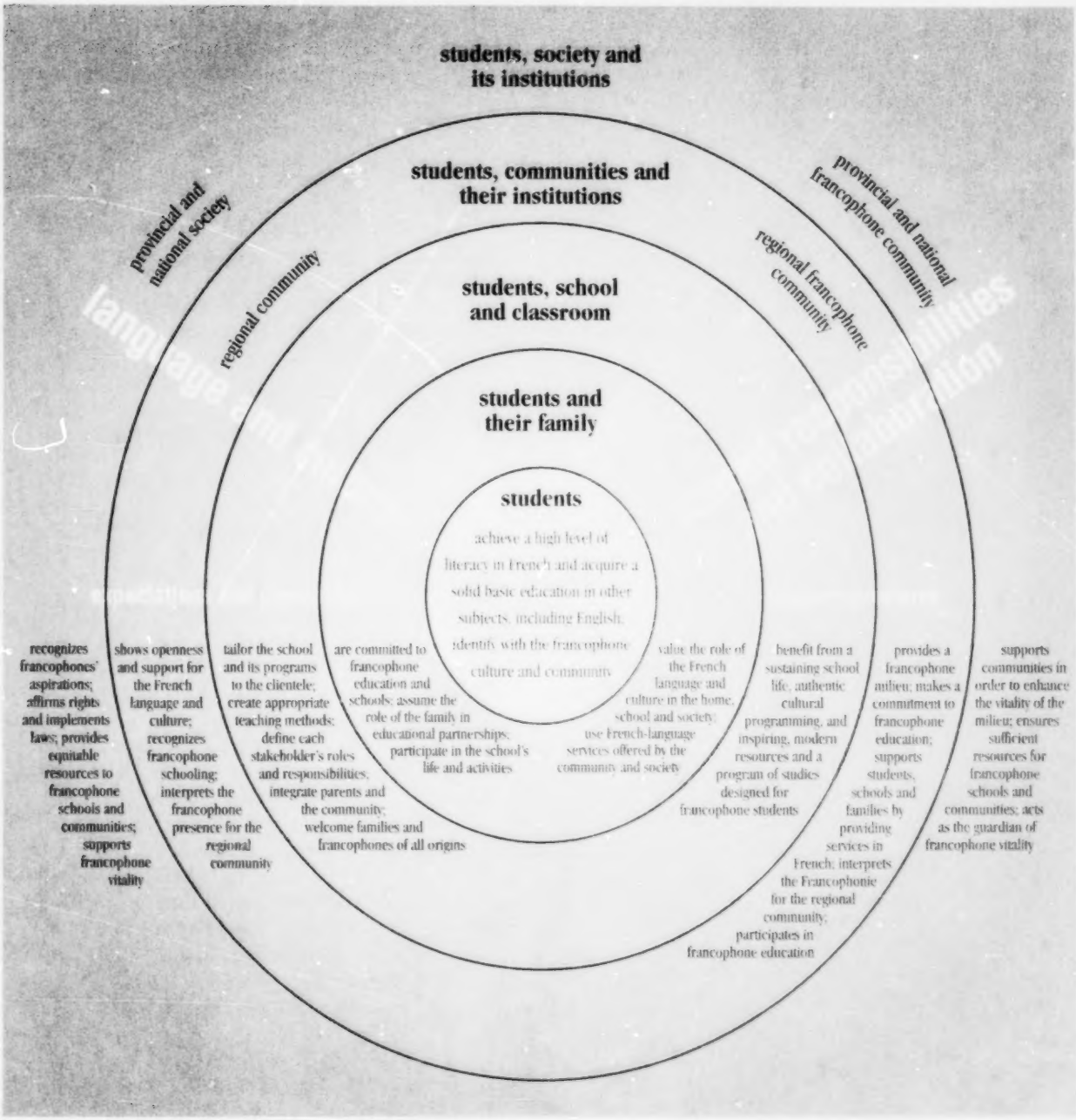
As the partners and their complementary roles are of utmost importance in francophone education, it is desirable—if not essential—that partnerships be forged.

Partners and partnerships

Partnerships have become an integral part of education in general, and an essential aspect of francophone schooling in particular. Alberta Learning stresses the interrelated nature of the educational partners' roles and responsibilities—an approach that stands to benefit francophone education, with its inherent home-school-community component.

Table 1

Francophone education
Complementary contexts and roles


students, society and its institutions
students, communities and their institutions
students, school and classroom
students and their family
students
achieve a high level of literacy in French and acquire a solid basic education in other subjects, including English; identify with the francophone culture and community
provincial and national society
regional community
provincial and national francophone community
regional francophone community
recognizes francophones' aspirations; affirms rights and implements laws; provides equitable resources to francophone schools and communities; supports francophone vitality
shows openness and support for the French language and culture; recognizes francophone schooling; interprets the francophone presence for the regional community
tailor the school and its programs to the clientele; create appropriate teaching methods; define each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities; integrate parents and the community; welcome families and francophones of all origins
are committed to francophone education and schools; assume the role of the family in educational partnerships; participate in the school's life and activities
value the role of the French language and culture in the home, school and society; use French-language services offered by the community and society
benefit from a sustaining school life, authentic cultural programming, and inspiring, modern resources and a program of studies designed for francophone students
provides a francophone milieu; makes a commitment to francophone education; supports students, schools and families by providing services in French; interprets the Francophonie for the regional community; participates in francophone education
supports communities in order to enhance the vitality of the milieu; ensures sufficient resources for francophone schools and communities; acts as the guardian of francophone vitality

Source: Shernaz B. Garcia et al. in "Enhancing Achievement for Language Minority Students" (1995), based on a figure by Johnson (1994), adapted by Alberta Learning

• Definition of partnership

Partnership can be defined as a relationship based on common or compatible objectives and a distribution of specific roles and responsibilities among the participants. This distribution may be formal, informal, contractual or voluntary. A partnership assumes joint contribution of resources (human, financial, material) and thus the sharing of risks, powers and the resulting benefits. (Canadian Heritage/Patrimoine canadien)

• Purpose of educational partnerships

The document, *School Council Resource Manual*, describes the purpose of school councils as follows:

- "to enhance student learning";
- "to provide the structure through which all stakeholders come together to talk about the education of that community's children."

The school council is the ideal instrument for establishing "a [...] **partnership** formed to build shared visions of what our schools can be and to plan strategically how we'll make those visions realities." Partnership is thus an integral part of school councils.

• Educational partnerships in a francophone setting

The reasons for creating school councils are also key to the smooth operation of all partnerships in francophone education.

In education, a partnership is a group of partners that join forces to exert a positive and determining influence on student learning. Researchers have found that students in a minority setting are put at risk when the school is separated from family and community. Their findings show that, when families and the community help plan, implement and evaluate student learning in a minority setting, academic performance improves and student alienation decreases. By exercising their influence, school partnerships can play an important role in ensuring coherence in student learning. Educational partnerships in francophone schools help encourage language acquisition, cultural and community integration, and a strong identification with the Francophonie, in addition to enhancing student achievement.

In the *School Council Resource Manual*, the following drawing illustrates how school councils work:

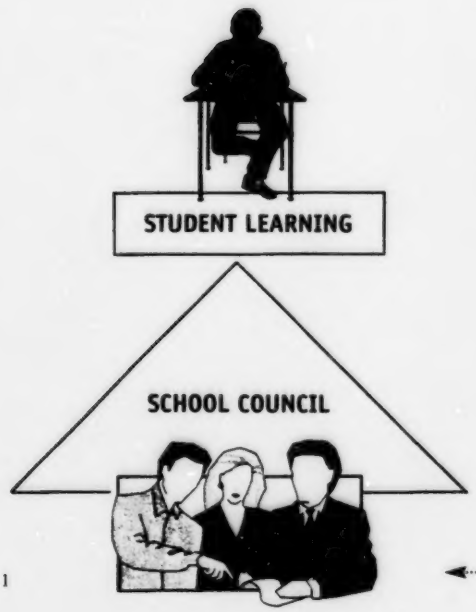


Figure 1

This image can be adapted to show the three key partners in francophone education: family, school, and community and its institutions:

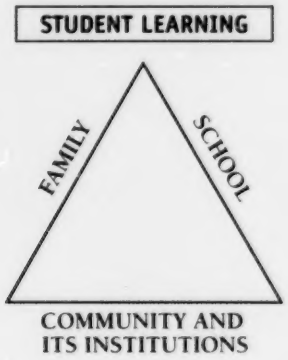


Figure 2

The family and the school, both rooted in the community and collaborating with it, join forces to ensure the students' acquisition of language, identity building, cultural and community integration, and academic success.

- **Three partners, numerous partnerships**

Transcribing the three partners from Figure 2 into a modified Venn diagram reveals a dynamic that features zones of complementarity, integration and coherence.

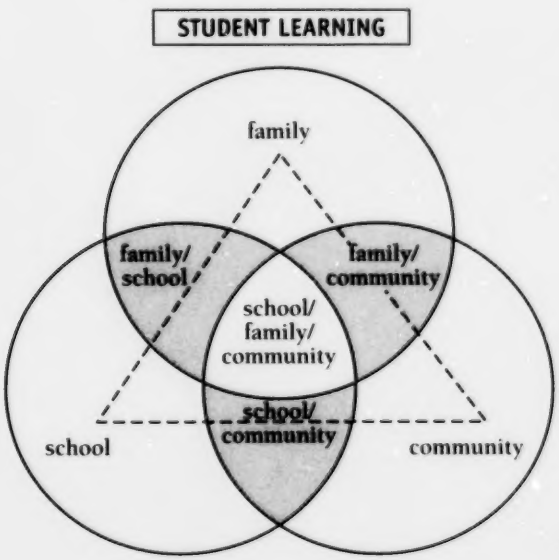


Figure 3

The three main partners—family, school, and community and its institutions—form the three corners of the triangle that supports student learning. Each partner occupies a circle corresponding to its specific role. The intersection of these circles creates three overlapping areas of integration and shared vitality: the family/school, family/community and school/community zones. In the centre lies the core three-way partnership: family/school/community. In all, four distinct zones ensure the creation of partnerships that support complementarity in francophone education.

Landry and Allard (1988–1991) produced a model that illustrates how language acquisition depends on support from the family, school and community. In their counterbalance model of bilingual development, the principal partners are directly implicated in students' educational experience. The illustration clearly shows the complementarity of family, school and community in the acquisition of French and, by extension, in the achievement of academic success. Landry and Allard recommend an educational model where one or two of the three partners compensate(s) for the weakness of the other(s).

Counterbalance model of bilingual development

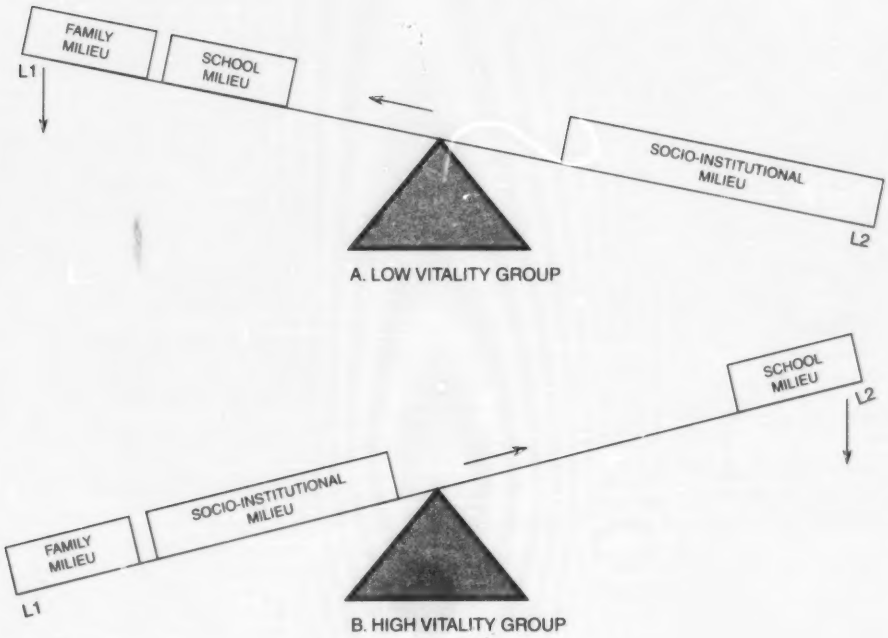


Figure 4

Although the support of family and school is vital to language acquisition in a minority setting, the socio-institutional and community components must also provide a real context and an authentic first-language setting. The arrow pointing toward L1 (first language) symbolizes the counterbalance needed for additive bilingualism. These observations reinforce the importance of the main partners and their potential partnerships in enhancing francophone students' success.

• Partners and partnerships in general

As Table II (pages 25-26) shows, a variety of partnerships can be created to support the complementarity of educational contexts and roles. The partners can be divided into three categories—persons (A), community institutions (B) public institutions (C)—and combine to form four types of partnerships: formal, informal, contractual and voluntary. (It should be noted that the partnership examples in Table II are entirely arbitrary.)

The number of partnerships created is not significant in itself. Rather, it is important that the partnerships truly meet the educational community's instructional, linguistic and cultural needs. They must be useful and effective, and support the mandate and mission of francophone education.

Educational partnerships have the potential to empower all partners seeking to enhance the effectiveness and growth of francophone education.

Table II

FORMING PARTNERSHIPS

Examples of partners

Persons

A

1. student
2. parents
3. teacher
4. principal
5. superintendent
6. secretary-treasurer
7. support staff
8. providers of special services
9. business people
10. day care workers
11. others

Community institutions

B

1. family
2. community
3. FPFA*
4. FCSCCA*
5. parent committees
6. parish/church
7. businesses
8. ATA* and Local 24*
9. ACFA*
10. FJA*
11. others

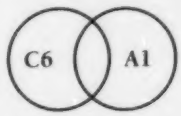
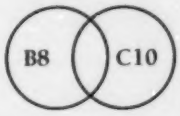
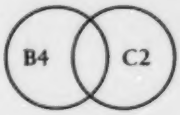
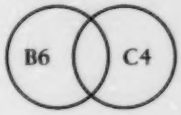
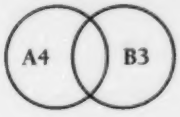
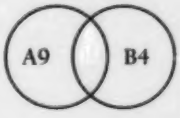
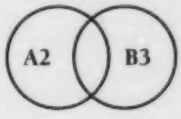
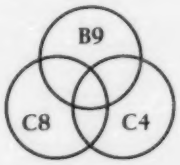
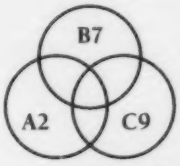
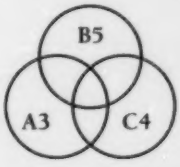
Public institutions

C

1. provincial government
2. Alberta Learning
3. French Language Services Branch
4. regional francophone (school) authority
5. co-ordinating council
6. school
7. school council
8. federal government
9. municipal government
10. postsecondary institutions
11. others

* See Acronyms in appendices.

Examples of partnerships

formal	informal	contractual	voluntary
			
			
			

Conclusion

In a minority setting, the family, school and community play key roles in students' lives in the areas of language acquisition, cultural and community integration, identity building, and academic success.

THE FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL

ITS EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Description

The francophone school's educational project is a collaborative endeavor characterized by a broad-based commitment to define, implement and renew schooling for a specific community. It is an ongoing process of seeking those influences that benefit both students and the community through initiatives taken by the project's partners. An authentic educational project is evidenced by tangible commitments in the classroom, the life of the school, the home and the community—in other words, it is found at the very heart of the home-school-community relationship.

The educational project is **a concept and a framework for supporting and fostering the development, implementation and renewal of the francophone school and its programming.**

An educational project is the fruit of a community process in which a school community clearly identifies its past, sets its own directions, adopts suitable implementation measures, and assesses the degree to which its outcomes are met. The object of the process is to guide all actions intended to promote student learning and yield the desired results. The school community implements its educational project and periodically renews it with the participation of students, parents, school staff, the school board, the community and any other stakeholder committed to the francophone school's mission and mandate.

Characteristics

The application of the educational-project concept to francophone education in an anglophone milieu requires collaboration, cohesiveness and solidarity. The goal is to provide students with an effective education in terms of:

- gaining a high level of additive bilingualism;
- building a positive, harmonious francophone identity;
- pursuing academic excellence that reflects students' capabilities and society's expectations;
- integrating students into the francophone community, and ensuring the sustained cultural vitality of students, parents and the francophone community;
- ensuring francophones' full individual and collective contribution to the community, society and the world.

The educational project takes into account the community's French-language vitality. It can act as a counterbalance by promoting more extensive language use and practices among the family, school and community, thereby contributing to a broader authentic life environment that actualizes French language and culture.

"The additive or subtractive nature of bilingualism will depend on individuals' language experience, determined in large part by the community's ethnolinguistic vitality." (Landry and Allard, 1991)

"If institutionalization is limited to the school, do we not risk creating a situation that consecrates subtractive bilingualism?" (Benoît Cazabon, 1992, trans.).

Five core components

The educational project comprises the following five basic components.

1. History

The school community traces the history of its educational past: why and how the school was created, and how it has evolved.

2. The understanding of francophone education

The school community identifies the nature of its clientele and determines its specific educational and cultural needs.

In general, the conception (implementation) of francophone schooling in a minority setting takes into consideration:

- the nature of the milieu in which students, families and the community live;
- a learning framework shaped by the clientele's educational, cultural and community language needs;
- the home-school-community partnership needed to carry out the educational mandate and mission.

3. Values that unite the school community

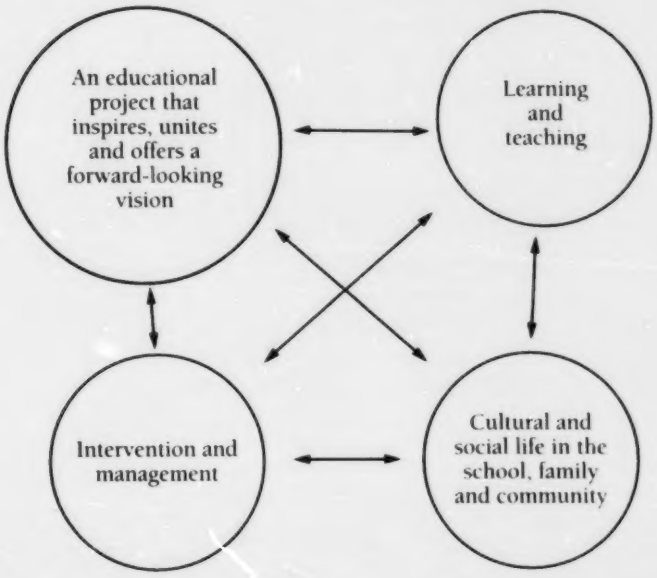
The school community identifies the human, cultural, educational and community values that are held by enough of its members and can be used to structure and support the educational project. These values will reflect the school's vision and mission, as well as the community's vision of its future.

4. Interconnections

The francophone school's diverse interconnections help ensure a quality and coherent framework. This framework, which serves both the school community and students, integrates the following domains: language, identity, culture, social, affective, pedagogy and morality. These connections exist among three constituents of the educational project, as illustrated in Figure 5: learning and teaching, cultural and academic life, and intervention and management. The constituents provide a foundation for the experiences of students and of the other community members involved in the project.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT MODEL

Figure 5


An educational project that inspires, unites and offers a forward-looking vision
Learning and teaching
Intervention and management
Cultural and social life in the school, family and community

(Adapted from Paquette, 1996.)

5. Roles and responsibilities

As strategic role distribution is a key to the success of the educational project, the school community determines the roles of the home, school and community for effective francophone education. It also designates the leadership responsible for guiding, supervising and evaluating the project and its constituents.

Actualizing the educational project

When the school community decides to undertake an educational project, it follows certain steps in the implementation and actualization process. These key steps group together the activities throughout the project's evolution.

1. Initiating the project

The process begins when the school community's motivation and commitment incite its members and partners to have an appreciable, desirable and coherent impact on the students' learning experiences.

2. Examining and analyzing the school community's experience and setting directions

The school community members and partners first review the state of affairs within their community and school. This is a reflective process, as it concerns matters as they stand.

The school community members and partners then turn their attention to those elements that should be reaffirmed and consolidated under the existing educational project, and those where innovation is needed to accommodate the evolution of both students and the school community. Since this addresses future directions, it is an anticipatory process.

3. Developing and implementing an action plan

This is the point where major decisions are made, where the choice of directions and strategies are determined by the community's shared values. The key components of the educational project are divided into three strategic constituents: learning and teaching, cultural and social life, and intervention and management, thereby giving life to the ideas and observations generated in step 2. At this third step, the community identifies and undertakes, within the implementation framework of the educational project, concrete actions as they relate to the classroom, school life, home and community.

4. Assessing and realigning the educational project

An assessment strategy keeps members informed of the project's accomplishments, and of any realignments made to reflect evolving educational needs and the growth of the students, their school, homes and community.

Conclusion

The educational-project model best suited to a school community and its school depends on the shared understandings of the different partners. Regardless of the model adopted, **the educational project aims to provide an effective framework for the school's programming in order to meet the educational and cultural needs of students, families and the community.** It embodies a strategy of community involvement that actualizes the vision, mission and the results for which the school was conceived and created.

CONCLUSION

Learning in a francophone school environment is an all-encompassing experience, designed to meet both the educational needs of students in a minority setting and the needs of the community. It prepares children for autonomy and the complete actualization of their capacities through additive bilingualism, numerous literacies, a cultural identity rooted in the Francophonie, and the ability to participate wholly in society.

ADDENDUM

FRANCOPHONE EDUCATION IN ALBERTA

PROVINCIAL FRAMEWORK

1. Provincial legislation

The government of Alberta is responsible for education. It provides for the operation and financing of schools. The Provincial Legislature enacts legislation that governs the school system.

The *School Act* is the central piece of legislation concerning elementary and secondary education.

The provisions related to governance and school administration are major components of the *School Act*.

A variety of documents (educational guides, administrative manuals, etc.) explain or elaborate certain aspects of the *School Act* and its regulations.

2. Minister of Learning

The Minister of Learning is an elected member of Alberta's legislative assembly. Under the *School Act*, he or she has the power to authorize the Program of Studies. The Minister sets the goals and standards for the instruction and evaluation of all elementary and secondary students, including those receiving francophone schooling. The Minister is also responsible for teacher certification and assessment.

3. Alberta Learning

The Minister is supported by Alberta Learning in managing the schooling system throughout the province.

4. French Language Services Branch

The French Language Services Branch is part of the Basic Learning Division of Alberta Learning. The Branch is responsible for addressing the educational needs of French as a first and second language students.

5. Public school jurisdictions

There are three types of public school jurisdictions in Alberta: public school boards, separate school boards and regional francophone authorities. School boards and regional authorities cover overlapping geographic areas. Among their responsibilities under the *School Act*, they oversee, direct and are accountable for policies and administrative practices related to the provision of teaching and public-education services, including the management of public funds received for that purpose.

6. Regional francophone authority

A regional francophone authority holds the same powers and responsibilities as a public or separate school board, except for the levying of taxes. However, it has the specific mandate to govern francophone schools within its region or under its supervision.

A regional authority can determine its schools' denominational vocation[1] and can govern both denominational and non-denominational institutions according to the spirit of section 199 of the *School Act of the Province of Alberta*.[2]

7. School councils

The *School Act* requires that a school council be formed in each school. School councils are made up of the partners in children's education.

School councils must operate in accordance with the *School Act*, regulations issued by the Minister of Learning, school board policies, and their own policies and bylaws. Their role is to advise the principal and school board on all school-related matters.

Council members strive to collaborate in order to promote the well-being and effectiveness of the entire school community, and thereby enhance student learning.

[1] *Francophone Governance Implementation Handbook*. School Business Administration Services, Alberta Education (1994).

[2] Province of Alberta, *School Act*. Statutes of Alberta, 1988.

8. General financing of school boards and francophone regional authorities

- **Provincial funding**

In general terms, the provincial government assumes the responsibility for equitably financing school boards and regional authorities, so as to provide educational programs aimed at producing comparable and equitable results throughout the province.

- **Federal funding**

School boards and regional authorities may have access to federal funding under the federal-provincial Official Languages in Education (OLE) agreement. The province administers these funds.

APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

A.1

additive bilingualism
- type of bilingualism where the acquisition of a second language does not lead to diminished or inadequate first language development
- comprises:
  - a high level of proficiency in both communicative and thought (cognitive academic) processes in the first language (L_1) and the second language (L_2)
  - the maintenance of strong ethnolinguistic identity and positive beliefs toward one's own language, culture and community, while holding positive attitudes toward the second language and that group's culture
  - the use of one's language without diglossia, i.e. without relegating one's language exclusively to less-valued social roles, functions or activities

anglodominant
- predominantly English milieu
- situations in which the English language and culture permeate all aspects of social and public life as well as some or all aspects of family and personal life

balanced bilingualism
- equivalent competence in two languages
- not necessarily a high degree of proficiency in both languages
- should not be equated with the ability to use both languages for all functions and fields of activity

contexts
- range of circumstances in which one uses a language
- overall situation or text that shapes the meaning and value of linguistic elements

counterbalance model of bilingual development
- a model that illustrates how different milieus can act as a counterbalancing force to increase the relative strength of the weaker of two languages in a socio-institutional setting

culture
- complex combination of knowledge, language, values, beliefs, art, law, morals and customs specific to a group of people who share certain historical and linguistic roots
- changes continually and therefore includes elements of enrichment, adaptation, conflict, opposition and integration (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1994)

decontextualized communication
- communication that requires abstract modes of thought leading to higher levels of academic and communicative capacities

- necessitates cognitive competence, or the ability to make effective use of a language's thought functions, i.e. to use language effectively as an instrument of thought and represent thinking (cognitive operations) by means of language

erosion of minorities
- refers to minorities of official language groups as per Supreme Court of Canada in the Mahé/Bugnet vs. Alberta case, 1990
- gradual disappearance and extinction of an official minority group's language vitality, identity, culture, and community
- a general process or a set of processes which cause the disappearance of a linguistic minority group by the prolonged action of linguistic and cultural assimilation

ethnolinguistic vitality
- extent to which the language of a group or community is used and valued within society
- degree to which a language group or community controls its own institutions or shows "institutional completeness"
- [the relative ethnolinguistic vitality of a group or community] can be measured objectively by analyzing the group's demographic, economic, political and cultural resources (Landry and Allard, 1991)

facilities of the minority
- in the context of section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, means specified educational institutions including materials, installations and decision-making power, belonging to an official language group or community

francité
- one's Francophone identity and sense of belonging to the Francophone culture and/or community

Francophonie
- the French-speaking countries and communities of the world collectively
- a loosely united group of nations in which French is a first, or culturally significant language (*The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 1998)
- Francophones within Canada

institutionalization
- act of institutionalizing
- conferring on something an official nature, a legal and recognized status
- ensuring access to the active, concrete provision of services in a language, in institutions and other entities within a society

interconnection
- relation between numerous entities, the optimal functioning of each depending on and influencing that of the others
- connections that generate interdependent, complementary movements and dynamics
- a combination of established elements and others to be integrated for coherent understanding and action

intercultural
- for the purposes of this document, means:
  - a mix of cultures, i.e., a mix of French language or francophone cultures, or
  - a mix of ethnic cultures, including anglophone cultures, coming together with a francophone component to form a francophone milieu or community

language levels
- language use adapted to the situation or persons to whom one is speaking
- can be divided into four categories:
  - formal (literary or refined)
  - correct (accurate or official)
  - informal (everyday conversations with family and friends)
  - colloquial (includes improper, derogatory or vulgar terms, incorrect conjugations, poor usage, contradictions, mispronunciations, anglicisms, etc.)

literacies
- **academic literacy**: the learning of interpretive and communicative processes needed to adapt socially to educational and linguistic contexts, and the use of those processes to gain a conceptual understanding of school subjects
- **community literacy**: appreciation, understanding and use of a cultural or linguistic community's interpretive and communicative traditions
- **personal literacy**: critical awareness of ways of knowing and believing about self that comes from thoughtful examination of historical or experiential backgrounds in school and in linguistic and cultural community settings (Hollingsworth and Gallego, OISE, 1996)

literacy
- the acquisition of a broad range of factors and a composite of attitudes, aptitudes and reflexes which lead to academic, personal and community literacy, i.e. familiarity with the linguistic traditions, information and know-how necessary for the informed participation in the political, social and cultural life of a cultural community and of the broader society
- in a minority context, individuals are functionally literate when they have acquired the knowledge and skills that enable them to engage effectively in all those activities where literacy is normally assumed in both their culture or linguistic group and society as a whole

section 23 parent
- parent whose children qualify for francophone (French first language) education under section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982)

self-actualization
- highest point in a person's development
- for the purposes of this document, means the fulfillment of oneself as a francophone in the areas of language, cultural identity, community integration and participation in society
- ability to express oneself, communicate, learn and affirm one's culture (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1994)

self-esteem
- how one views oneself
- individuals' evaluative regard for themselves or personal judgment of their worthiness

subtractive bilingualism
- situation that arises whenever the acquisition of a second language leads to diminished or inadequate first-language development at the cognitive (thought), linguistic (language), affective (identity) and behavioral (social and institutional) levels (Landry and Allard, 1991)

ACRONYMS

ACFA	Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (the French-Canadian association of Alberta)
ATA	Alberta Teachers' Association
FCSCCA	Fédération des conseils scolaires et des conseils de coordination de l'Alberta (a federation of francophone school authorities and coordinating councils in Alberta)
FJA	Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta (an Alberta francophone youth association)
FPFA	Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (a federation of francophone parents in Alberta)
Local #24	Unité locale n° 24 (Francophone ATA Local)

A.2 Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982)

23. (1) Citizens of Canada

(a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or

(b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province,

have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

(3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province

(a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and

(b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.

Source: *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms. A Guide for Canadians*, Government of Canada, 1982. p. 21, 22.

A.3 Section 5 of the *School Act*, Province of Alberta

5.(1) If an individual has rights under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to have his children receive school instruction in French, his children are entitled to receive that instruction in accordance with those rights wherever in the province those rights apply.

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

a) respecting the education generally of students whose parents are Francophones;

b) respecting co-ordinating councils;

c) notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, respecting any matter required to give effect to subsection (1).

(3) A student who is enrolled in a school operated by a Regional authority is entitled to receive school instruction in French.

(4) A Regional authority shall provide to each student enrolled in a school operated by it an education program consistent with the requirements of this Act and regulations.

[Other relevant sections to Francophone education and governance: 1(1)(f.1), 2, 16(1), 223.1-233.8.]

Source: Province of Alberta. *School Act*. Statutes of Alberta, 1988, Chapter S-3.1 with amendments in force as of March 26, 1998. Consolidated September 3, 1998. Queen's Printer for Alberta.

A.4

Alberta Francophone Education Regions

1994

1 Northwest Francophone Education Region No.1

2 Northeast Francophone Education Region No.2

3 East Central Francophone Education Region No.3

4 North Central Francophone Education Region No.4

5 Central Francophone Education Region No.5

6 South Central Francophone Education Region No.6

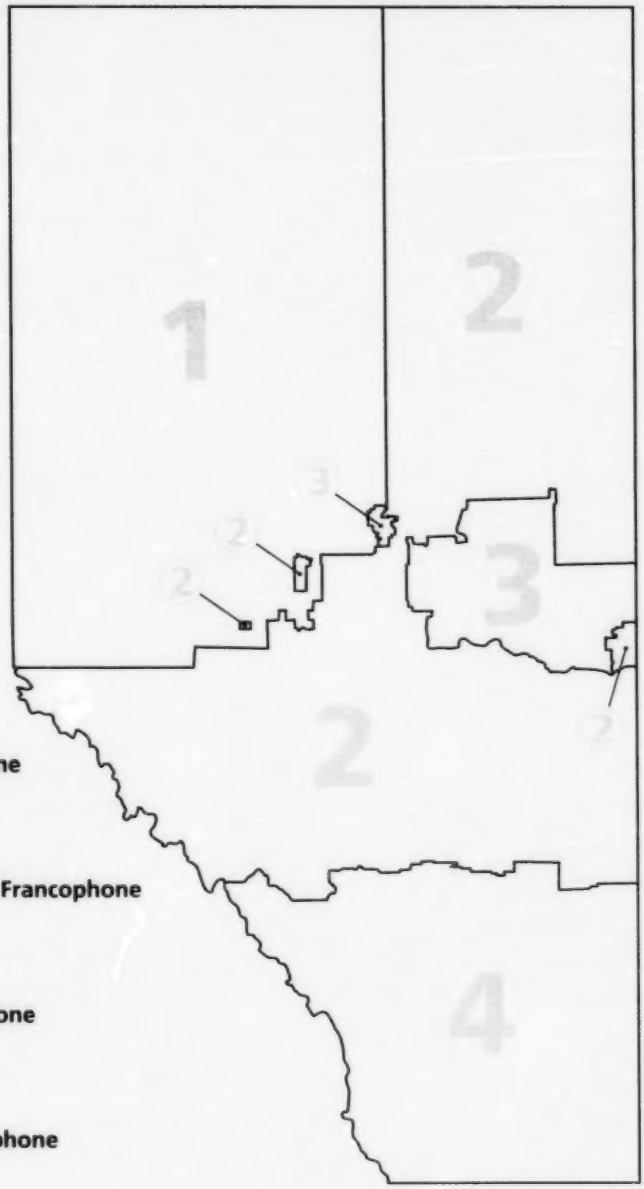
7 Southern Francophone Education Region No.7

Source: *Francophone Governance Implementation Handbook*. Alberta Education, Edmonton, 1994, p. 8.

A.5

Alberta Francophone Education Regions

2000



1 **The Northwest Francophone Education Region No. 1**

2 **The Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No. 2**

3 **The East Central Francophone Education Region No. 3**

4 **The Greater South Francophone Education Region No. 4**

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